

Partners for High Performance Homes Meeting Notes April 14th, 2005

Next Meeting: June 14th, (a Tuesday) Tri-State Generation and Transmission
Speaker Topic: Hot Water Heaters – Speaker to be announced

UPCOMING Conferences & Meetings. There is a lot going on out there – pass it on!

May 6 – Contractor Opportunity Meeting: Home Performance with ENERGY STAR www.e-star.com

May 25-26 – Building It Better: Houses That Work Session May 25 in Parker, May 26 in Ft. Collins
Go to www.e-star.com for more information and registration!

May 19 –Infrared training workshop at Tri-State, 2 vendors training & demonstrating; targeting customer service, energy auditing & engineering personnel. Contact Peggy Plate.

June 8th & 9th - Building Solar Workshop in Ft. Collins. 2-day workshop will be an in-depth look at how to incorporate both solar thermal and photovoltaic applications into your building projects. Sessions about how to size, price and evaluate solar systems, along with where to go for assistance will be part of this workshop. Contact: Alison@greyrock.org for more info.

June 25-29 ASHRAE Annual meeting in Denver,. In conjunction with this, they are also offering professional development seminars and short courses for continuing ed credits, one of which is Introduction to Green Buildings and Sustainable Construction, and another dealing with Cost Effective Commercial and Industrial Solar Applications. All info can be found at www.ashrae.org

Speaker and Topic Discussion: Leslie Reed, Director of Sales for McStain Neighborhoods. The number one message from Leslie was, “our sales people believe in our mission and believe in our product”. If the sales staff understands and believes in the mission they are easily able to impart the value of the home to the customer. Other important facets of their sales program:

- Tours – strive to show customers every energy saving component
- Sales training – detailed manual developed and utilize role playing
- Spend time on site with sales people
- Props & brochures in each sales office
- Great demonstrations in homes

McStain does 100% testing on home performance they are able to tell buyers what their home will likely score and then follow up with actual results = buyer satisfaction follow through. Because of the McStain website, many folks have done lots of research ahead of time, they know what the company is about, and they are familiar with McStain homes. The top 2 questions from buyers:

- How much will this home save me in utility bills?
- How much is it going to cost me?

Questions & Answers with Leslie:

- 1) Discussion regarding the word “premium”
Some interpret it to mean “better” or “quality” while others see it as “costs more”.
- 2) Do you give referrals to potential buyers?
Yes, potential buyers are encouraged to seek out current owners for their input.
- 3) Sales training? Someone once said sales staff has to hear something seven times before they “get it.” Do you have quality sales staff?
Sometimes sales consultants seek us out, have done their homework on us and they get it; these are easier to teach.
- 4) Sales training – how do you gauge if your sales staff believes in the product and understands it all?
Mystery shopping occasionally. Training class role playing (“tell us how you would handle this situation...”).
Longevity with a company usually equals a happy employee.
- 5) Full-page newspaper ads seem loaded with text. They contain good information, but have you had any feedback on the “text overload” factor?
Not sure if there’s been much feedback.
- 6) Is there a system of support for the salesperson?
New hires spend lots of time with various key folks in the company, gleaning information. Each one is given a “passport” they have to complete by interviewing certain individuals and departments. It seems to be well received and successful.
- 7) Any difference in your closing style?
All people have different styles of selling, and the company has no real “canned” method as far as closing.
- 8) What percentage of McStain employees live in McStain homes?
Approximately 15-16% of 105 employees.
- 9) What have you had in terms of turnover?
We’re going through some changes, so it’s been a little high lately. Normally a low rate.
- 10) What’s your criteria for selecting locations to develop communities?
Some landowners actually seek us out. Part of our image is looking for “A” building sites.

Updates:

Dave Schrock: Comfort Air hosted a Mark LaLiberte seminar and had 8 builders and 10 HVAC people attend. Village Homes attended and was very excited. Identified the need to make a better connection between HVAC companies and builders.

Doug Sieter: DOE State Energy Plan deadlines are coming up. It will be July before any decisions will be made. Also working with the group initiated at Built Green that is looking at the aspects of national programs. They have been assessing the different programs and what opportunities for partnering might be available to Colorado groups. Current thinking is don't spend time worrying about how to compete with LEED, let them come to us. Time will be better spent building Built Green brand for Colorado.

Robby Swarz: Big changes will be coming from Energy Star, comment period ends 4/30. Changes of note: requirement for insulation inspections, thermal by-pass inspections, and bringing the software in to alignment to reflect changes in market and standards.

Kirstin Marr: Smart Energy Living Spring Issue is out – please distribute. New from CESC- expansion of Home Energy Make-Overs to Colorado Springs and Montrose, they hosted an energy awareness day with the Denver Broncos. High energy prices are really hitting low income consumers, according to Energy Outreach Colorado, low income bill assistance requests are up 300%.

Doug Swarz: Recent Open House Tour “behind the drywall” was well attended over 150 consumers came to Aspen Homes for the tour. Much higher attendance than previous tour. FC Utilities will be doing 4 Super Ratings for Fort Collins Builders. FC Utilities also participating in the expansion of the pilot of High Performance Homes with Energy Star. See May 6th meeting announcement at beginning of notes.

Kristin Shewfelt/Megan Edmunds: Waiting list for rating training!

Traci D'Alessio: Heading up national program comparison, working with EEBA for conference in October.

Justin Wilson: To add to Leslie Reed's talk about McStain's Sales program here are a few of the other McStain commitments worth noting:

- Duct Blasting on every home
- Random testing (full commissioning) done on 15% of all homes
- 100% get an Energy Star rating
- By late 2005 they will also do Insulation and thermal by-pass inspections on 100% of homes.

Susan Castellon: Working with Andy Blackmun of Metro Habitat for Humanity to do 3 workshops throughout Colorado for other Habitat affiliates – emphasis on sharing Metro Habitat's best practices. Energy Outreach Colorado will also be a co-sponsor and will be providing monetary incentives for builders who meet objectives. Spoke to Patty Crow about EPA funding. EPA is looking for projects/programs that continue to promote Energy Star programs.

Steve Andrews: Suggests everyone READ “Roadmap for High Performance Home Building, or High Performance Home Building; Where Do We Start” Simply outlines the steps to HP home building. It can be found on www.coloradoenergy.org under Partners for High Performance Homes. Will be hosting an event in the fall focusing on World Oil. Will have evening-before event, all-day conference & end with a consumer event. More details will follow.

John Beldock: Eco Broker classes scheduled in Ft. Collins, both online and in person. National agencies may step in to bring equality to all the “EE” labels, we should actively volunteer to help this effort.

Peggy Plate, May 19 – infrared training workshop at Tri-State, 2 vendors training & demonstrating; targeting customer service, energy auditing & engineering personnel
Electric rates going up & muni’s having lots of complaints re: rates. There’s a need to train utility staff on residential energy audits
June 8th & 9th: Building Solar Workshop in Ft. Collins. 2-day workshop will be an in-depth look at how to incorporate both solar thermal and photovoltaic applications into your building projects. Sessions about how to size, price and evaluate solar systems, along with where to go for assistance will be part of this workshop.

Paul Higman: MASCO not going in the direction he would like to see.

Steve Byers: Will be doing more training on solar and green building given the handwriting on the wall.

Keith Emerson, United Power ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc.) Annual meeting in Denver, June 25-29. In conjunction with this, they are also offering professional development seminars and short courses for continuing ed credits, one of which is Introduction to Green Buildings and Sustainable Construction, and another dealing with Cost Effective Commercial and Industrial Solar Applications. All info can be found at www.ashrae.org

Jody Wagner: Helping to educate her community of Evergreen to set standards higher, will be going to go to town meetings where Ryland will be and asking tough questions about their building practices. Way to go Jody – taking it to the streets! Also, talking to Real Estate professionals and encouraging them to help people make better choices

Builder Survey Discussion about doing a builder survey and getting PHPH to sign off on it with the goal to put the results in the HBA magazine through an article by Steve Andrews. A subcommittee was formed to take on this task and they will bring a draft document to the next meeting. Contact Dave Schrock for more information or to be on the subcommittee.

Progress Matrix A spreadsheet was handed out with blank spaces for “progress items”. These are based on the 10 goals outlined by the New Home Stakeholders Group. This matrix will be updated and kept on the website. Please add anything you wish!